



The True Effects of Alcohol & Drug Abuse

By TommyK Woods

This scholarship prompt asked me to write an essay about a personal encounter with either drugs or alcohol. I have one encounter that affected me the most involving both drugs and alcohol. This encounter was handled in not the best way, but it taught me a lot about the problem with alcohol and drug abuse and how to handle it.

The encounter was with my best friend. He has been my best friend since I was thirteen and I honestly do not know what I would do without him. He was going into his senior year of high school and I noticed he started drinking quite a bit more than he usually did. I didn't see it as a problem at first. I knew he was going through a rough time with his family and his ex-girlfriend and I just figured he was trying to take his mind off things. Eventually I found out he was doing drugs with some of his friends. I realized right then, he was going through more than I thought he was.

I should have handled it differently. When I tried confronting him about it, he got angry with me. He told me I should mind my own business and

that I need to understand that he can do whatever he wants. He kept telling me that he was perfectly fine, but that was so far from the truth. No normal person goes from skyping their best friend every night, all night long, just to make sure they don't have nightmares, to barely speaking at all. That is not what someone who is fine does. You don't yell at your best friend and isolate yourself from everything and everyone you love. I should have told someone who could have helped him sooner. I should have told his mom or his brother.

He was in two car accidents that year due to drinking and drugs. I keep thinking that if I had told someone, he wouldn't have been in those accidents. I think the second car accident and me yelling at him for an hour is what finally made him realize what he was doing to himself. He didn't just suddenly quit drinking and doing drugs though, he slowly eased off of it all. He isn't the same person he was before though, and I don't think he ever will be, but that is better than him still using drugs and drinking.

I learned that fear can change everything in your life. The worst part of all of it wasn't losing my best friend, it was standing by and watching all this happen because I lived a thousand miles away and couldn't do anything about it. When those two car accidents happened, both of those nights, I stayed up until three in the morning waiting on a text telling me that everything was okay, that he was going home now. The fear I felt from the thought that the last thing I would have said to him was, "Fine, go be an f***ing drunk then. I don't care about you anymore," made me sick to my stomach. I couldn't and still can't stand the thought of being without my best friend. It taught me to choose my words carefully because you never know when they might be your last. More importantly, it taught me that the problem isn't always noticeable. I didn't notice he was drunk half the time, I barely noticed he was higher than a kite. It's hard to tell when you don't actually see them or talk to them in person. I realized another problem though, as a teen, not many of us know how to react or what to do in times like this. I never realized that alcohol and drugs could affect someone the way it did with him. In school, kids don't really learn the true effects of alcohol and drug abuse, and that is something that should change.

My encounter with drug and alcohol abuse changed my perspective on a lot of things and it made me realize how much I rely on my best friend. It taught me how to handle this problem a little better and what I should have done differently. I almost lost my best friend that year, and I pray that no one else has to go through that. 🙏

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

TommyK Woods is a high school senior from Montana. *Alert Magazine* congratulates her for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage her in the pursuit of her academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.